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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVITY,
OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE, AND SHAME**

By

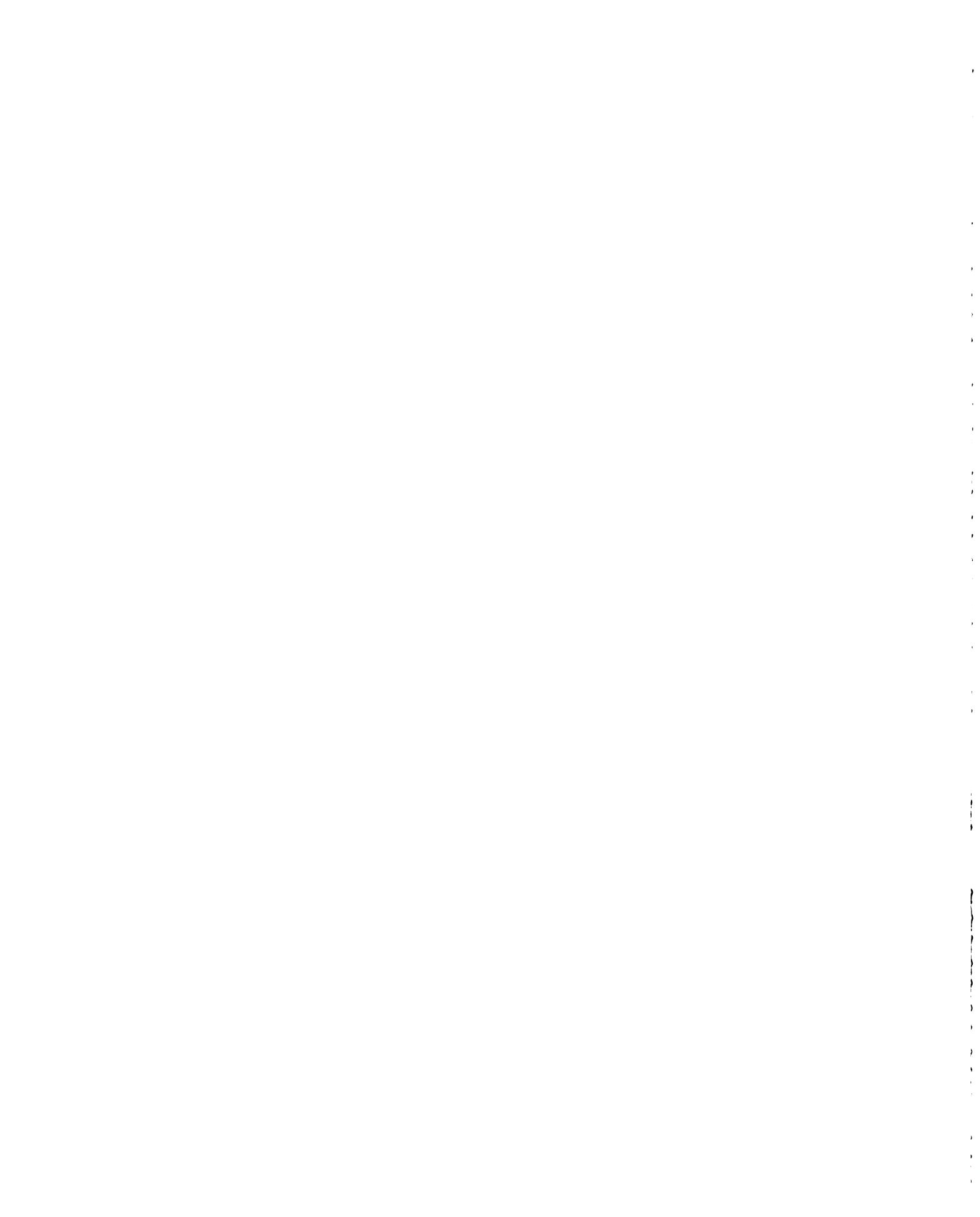
Brenden Readett

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

**Department of Psychology
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ABSTRACT

The Relationship Between Creativity, Openness to Experience, and Shame

By

Brenden T. Readett

This study explored the relationship between creative functioning, openness to experience, and shame. Support was sought for a humanistic conceptualization of creative functioning that highlights the close relationship between creativity and openness to experience. Disconfirming evidence was sought for psychoanalytic conceptualizations of creativity which portray creative functioning as indicative of psychopathology. One hundred and three undergraduate students were administered the Creative Functioning Test, the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-Personality Inventory, and the Internalized Shame Scale. Creative functioning was found to be significantly correlated positively with both openness to experience and level of internalized shame.

To my father.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This investigation aimed to explore the relationship between three constructs: creativity, openness to experience, and shame. Psychoanalytic theorists have long associated creativity with psychopathology, while humanistic theorists have viewed creativity primarily as a sign of healthy psychological functioning. This investigation hoped to contribute to this dialogue by demonstrating a positive relationship between creative functioning and openness to experience, a variable associated with psychological health, as well as a negative relationship between creativity and internalized shame, a variable associated with psychopathology. Rogers's (1961) theory of creativity posits that creative functioning rests on the individual's ability to remain open to his or her subjective inner experience of affect. Tomkins's (1963) affect theory and Kaufman's (1992,1996) shame theory both argue that shame is a primary inhibitor of an individual's ability to remain open to the experience of affect. Based on these theories, openness to experience is hypothesized to be an intervening variable linking shame and creativity. Shame is hypothesized to impact creative functioning by directly inhibiting the individual's ability to remain open to the experience of affect.

Creativity

The creative act always involves some element of mystery. Karl Popper (1959), the father of modern-day philosophy of science, argues that creative inspiration is fundamentally irrational, and therefore nothing systematic can be said about it. Popper

distinguishes between the "discovery" and the "justification" of a new hypothesis, arguing that science is properly concerned only with the latter. The actual process by which a novel idea comes into being is viewed as irrelevant, and science should concern itself only with substantiating or refuting the new hypothesis, once proposed. From this perspective, the creative act is beyond the scope of scientific inquiry. In Popper's view, not only is a psychology of creativity irrelevant to the pursuit of scientific understanding but more importantly, it is impossible.

Popper's position is not a new one. Plato was also of the opinion that the mystery of creativity could never be captured by rational understanding. "A poet is holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him . . . for not by art does he utter these, but by power divine" (Rothenberg, 1990). Even if the mystery of creativity is ultimately to remain impenetrable, a significant number of researchers and theorists have sought to look more closely at the process that Popper claims is beyond the scope of scientific inquiry. Many different avenues of investigation into the nature of creativity have been developed by researchers and explored in a variety of settings. Nevertheless, a global definition of creativity has proven elusive. In their review of current research on creativity, Mumford and Gustafson (1988) suggest that the lack of integration of creativity research "may be attributed to the fact that, like intelligence, creativity represents a highly complex and diffuse construct." They point out that the principal researchers in the field conceptualize creativity quite differently. For example, Guilford (1950) defined creativity in terms of the production of ideas, MacKinnon (1962) as an attribute of personality, Cattell (1971) as a form of problem-

solving ability, and still others have focussed on actual measures of achievement. Nevertheless, Kosslyn (1980) suggests that "it is not necessary to begin with a crisp definition of an entity in order to study it. . . . It is hard to define something one knows little about."

What is necessary is a clearly specified operational definition which contains a methodology that can be systematically replicated, and a theory that directs research and gives meaning to the findings. Creativity research to date has been guided by one of three primary theoretical orientations: psychometric, psychoanalytic, and humanistic.

The Psychometric Orientation

The psychometric approach to creativity research has focussed primarily on cognitive abilities, and it developed directly out of the study of intelligence. Binet (1908) coined the term "divergent thinking" to represent that type of "creative" thinking that does not conform to established rules. Guilford (1967) developed methods of testing this dimension by measuring an individual's ability to use well-known objects like a brick or a newspaper in unusual ways. Most researchers familiar with the creativity literature would, when employing a typical "creativity test" use one of several popular tests of divergent thinking such as Guilford's. Nevertheless, these tests have been criticized on a variety of grounds. Psychometric tests of creativity incur the risk of confounding creativity with a certain "pseudo-creative" attitude, often associated with verbal fluency (Smith and Carlsson, 1990). Ward (1974) argues that it is inappropriate to claim that test performance is indicative of creativity. He argues that the tests generally measure a much narrower range of abilities. Furthermore, the construct validity (both concurrent and

predictive) of many creativity tests has been seriously questioned by Jordan (1975), Goolsby & Helwig (1975), Bastos (1974), Kazelskis (1972), and Holland (1968). Nevertheless, it is still not uncommon within the psychometric orientation to administer blunt methods with low criterion correlations in ambitious projects on creativity.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of divergent thinking tests is their exclusive focus on cognitive activities such as problem solving. Many theorists view creativity as a dynamic process or as a by-product of a certain way of viewing internal and external reality. In these approaches, cognitive activities play only a small and often less significant role. As a result, divergent thinking tests are limited to a narrow range of theoretical constructions of creativity.

The Psychoanalytic Orientation

Aristotle reportedly said that no, "great genius was without a mixture of insanity" (Andreasen, 1978). Freud clearly believed that psychoanalytic theory supported and confirmed this idea. In *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1916-17), Freud gave the following account of art and the artist:

The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain honor, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his libido, too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of fantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis. (1916, p.75)

Thus for Freud, creative activity is a result of the artist's psychopathology and inability to function within everyday reality. In "Creative Writers and Daydreaming," Freud (1908)

suggests that the writer's gift corresponds to an ordinary person's daydreams or fantasies. Freud's main thesis is that a piece of creative writing, like a daydream, is both a continuation of and substitute for what was once the play of childhood, thus linking creativity to regressive types of thinking. In his book on jokes, Freud (1905c) suggested that jokes allow for the discharge of some pleasure which is otherwise not permitted to the individual, and primary processes play a crucial role in creative endeavors. In this way, Freud laid the groundwork for the generally accepted psychoanalytic notion that creativity is driven by the artist's psychopathology and involves some type of regression to more primitive modes of thinking.

Some research supports the idea that creative functioning is linked to the ability to access earlier modes of functioning. Research using the Creative Functioning Test (CFT), which is based on a percept-genetic theory of creative functioning (Smith & Carlsson, 1990), has shown that subjects who scored high on creativity using the CFT demonstrated the ability to communicate more easily with early childhood memories than lower scoring subjects. Typically, these memories were markedly sensual and represented both positive and negative emotions (Smith & Van Der Meer, 1994).

Many students of creativity, in the spirit of Hartmann (1939), have considered adaptive regression as an important prerequisite for the generation of new ideas. Kris (1952) in perhaps the most important psychoanalytic work on creativity to date, coined the concept of "regression in the service of the ego." His primary hypothesis is that "the integrative functions of the ego include self-regulated regression and permit a combination of the most daring intellectual activity with the experience of passive receptiveness." It is

important to note that this formulation is already a significant departure from Freud's original understanding of creative genesis. Unlike Freud, who believed that the creative act was the result of internal forces completely outside of the ego's control, Kris argues that the creative act is actually in the service of the ego and is therefore to some degree self-regulated. The precise nature of the role of intention in the creative process, however, remains obscure. Furthermore, Kris's term "ego regression," which implies primitivization of ego functions, retains to a large degree the flavor of Freud's earlier emphasis on the pathological sources of the creative act. In the insane artists that Kris describes, regression is a central pathological characteristic and a sign of permanent withdrawal from reality-oriented activity.

An important alternative position is that of Rothenberg (1979). In what seems to be an attractive synthesis of psychoanalytic theory and cognitive psychology, Rothenberg argues that during the creative act, the unconscious is intentionally and consciously accessed. This conscious activity is seen to be at least partly motivated by an attempt to gain control over unconscious material or its reflections in the external world. Rothenberg states:

The acid test regarding mental illness has to do with the processes directly responsible for creations. If mental illness were to impinge on these processes or, even more pertinent, if these processes had psychopathological roots, we could demand that the question be closed. But the specific creative processes I have described are not psychopathological in origin; they are at the opposite end of the spectrum. (1990, p.23)

The relationship between creativity and mental illness continues to be a controversial issue within psychoanalysis. Discussing this topic, Karon states the

following:

Artistic creation is not regression, but a complex ego function that all of us have, but only some of us develop to a high degree of efficiency as a means of coping with internal and external reality. It is not the case that one has to be psychopathological to be artistically gifted, but rather that if one has severe problems and is an artist, one uses this ego function to cope with one's problems. (1994, p.1)

The Humanistic Orientation

In contrast to the emphasis on pathological mechanisms in creative genesis so characteristic of psychoanalytic formulations, a number of prominent theorists have viewed creativity as a sign of healthy psychological functioning. Rogers argues as follows:

The mainspring of creativity appears to be the same tendency which we discover so deeply as the curative force in psychotherapy – *man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities* . . . This tendency may become deeply buried under layer after layer of encrusted psychological defenses, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed. It is this tendency which is the primary motivation for creativity as the organism forms new relationships to the environment in its endeavor to most fully be itself. (1961, p.350)

Rogers presents three *Inner Conditions of Constructive Creativity*. The first is *openness to experience* which is described as the opposite of psychological defensiveness. Openness to experience is characterized by a lack of rigidity, a permeability of boundaries in concepts, beliefs, perceptions, and hypotheses, as well as a tolerance for ambiguity. Rogers's second condition is an *internal locus of evaluation*. Here, Rogers suggests that creativity is a byproduct of a person's relationship with his or her own inner experience, particularly his or her relationship to affect. The third is the *ability to toy with elements and concepts*. Rogers's theory emphasizes the fact that creativity can ultimately be understood only as an expression of the specific individual. "Reality exists in a multiplicity

of confusing facts and impressions, but 'I' bring structure to my relationship to reality; I have 'my' way of perceiving reality, and it is this (unconsciously?) disciplined personal selectivity or abstraction which gives to creative products their aesthetic quality" (Rogers, 1961, p.349). Thus according to Rogers, creativity is fostered by particular ways of relating to one's self and one's inner experience, specifically in terms of openness and sensitivity to affect-laden thoughts and affect states.

Openness to Experience

A significant degree of empirical research has supported Rogers's hypothesis that creativity is a function of the individual's ability to be open and sensitive to subjective inner experience. The most substantiated relationships in the research literature are those between access to affect-laden thoughts and divergent thinking (Dudek & Verreault, 1989; Pine & Holt, 1960; Russ, 1988b) and openness to affect states and divergent thinking (Isen et al., 1987; Lieberman, 1977; Russ & Grossmann-McKee, 1990).

Research further demonstrates that children and adults who have access to affect-laden thoughts and fantasy are more creative than individuals who are less able to access this realm of experience. Research shows that access to affect-laden material and internal affect states relates to the personality traits of tolerance of ambiguity and openness to experience as measured by the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-Personality Inventory (McCrae & Costa, in press). These personality traits have also been shown to relate to divergent thinking (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Thus, the open attitude toward one's inner experience as described by Rogers has been demonstrated to relate to some of the key personality traits associated with creativity.

The domain of openness to experience has been gaining increasing attention as an important construct of personality. This construct shares central features with the traditional understanding of the creative personality. One landmark study on the creative personality using the Adjective Check List (Gough, 1979) found that highly creative people report themselves to be *clever, inventive, reflective, and unconventional*. Low scorers on creativity describe themselves as *commonplace, conservative*, and as having *narrow interests*. These items are consistent with the personality characteristics repeatedly identified in the literature as correlates of creativity, including aesthetic sensitivity, broad interests, independence of judgment, and tolerance for ambiguity (Barron & Harrington, 1981). It is possible to interpret most of these traits as components of a broad domain of personality identified as openness to experience (McCrae & Costa, 1985b). Factor analyses of creativity questionnaires, adjective rating scales, and Q-sort items all point to a five-factor model of personality similar to the taxonomy offered in 1963 by Norman (McCrae, 1987). Beyond Neuroticism, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness is a fifth domain, Openness to Experience, which includes intellectual curiosity, aesthetic sensitivity, liberal values, and emotional differentiation.

Shame

Shame theory (Kaufman, 1992, 1996) provides an explanation for why some individuals are more capable of consciously accessing affect-laden inner experience than others. Those who have difficulty remaining open to their inner experience, and are therefore conceivably inhibited creatively, are likely to be suffering from the effects of

internalized shame.

Shame has been understood theoretically in a number of ways, but systematic investigation of shame has only recently begun. The two primary theoretical perspectives on shame originate in Freudian psychoanalytic theory and Tomkins's affect theory.

Psychoanalytic Theory

In psychoanalytic theories of shame, the primary human motivational force is seen to be either libidinal drives or interpersonal relationships. In each case, affect is seen to play a subordinate role. Freud originally understood shame to be a reaction formation against morally forbidden, sexually exhibitionist impulses and drives (Miller, 1985). Miller argues that this view is too narrow, and that the experience of shame is not limited solely to bodily concerns. The sources and effects of shame are much more generalized than Freud's formulation of shame seems to allow.

Wurmser (1981) argues that shame results from a failure to meet the standards set by internalized images. Although Wurmser recognizes that our culture often equates shame with sexual exposure, he argues that shame often involves a broader experience of weakness or failure. For example, shame can be triggered by appearing weak or dirty or defective in one's own eyes. A person's original shame traumas can result in a profound sense of unloveability, and can also generate various forms of psychopathology. In this way, Wurmser believes that shame conflicts are the root cause of much severe psychopathology.

Some psychoanalytic theorists have understood shame as an outgrowth of interpersonal experience. Lewis (1987a, 1987c) suggests that shame is a "super-ego

experience" which alerts the self that "its basic affectional ties are threatened" (Lewis, 1987c). Shame is described as a state of self-devaluation which results from experiencing vicariously the negative evaluation of the self by another. Thus, shame necessarily develops out of relationships with others, and is seen to be originally caused by a failure of the central attachment bond. But shame is nevertheless viewed in the context of super-ego functioning.

Affect Theory

In contrast to the stress placed upon physiological drives and interpersonal relationships characteristic of psychoanalytic theories of shame, Tomkins's (1963, 1987) theory of affect conceptualizes affect as the primary innate motivational force in human beings. Tomkins has envisioned nine innate affects: interest--excitement, enjoyment--joy, surprise--startle, distress--anguish, fear--terror, anger--rage, shame--humiliation, dissmell, and disgust (Tomkins, 1987). The primary site of affect expression is the face, and affect is viewed primarily as facial behavior. It is from the facial expression of affect that conscious awareness of affect is informed. The facial response to shame is characterized by hanging the head, lowering or averting the eyes, and blushing.

Shame is viewed by Tomkins as an auxiliary affect (Tomkins, 1987a) which modulates the expression of some other presently occurring positive affect, notably interest or enjoyment. Thus in Tomkins's view, shame always requires the prior experience of positive affect. Kaufman (1992,1996) has expanded Tomkins's theory of shame and clarified the mechanism by which shame exerts its inhibiting effects.

According to Kaufman (1996), the expression of any affect, positive or negative,

can be responded to in ways that then permanently link it to shame.

As a result of shame's unique binding effects, expression of the shamed, hence forbidden, affect may become completely silenced, disguised, replaced by a more acceptable affect or entirely hidden from view. When all affects meet with shaming, a total affect-shame bind results, and affect per se becomes shameful. (1996, p.60)

Kaufman suggests that the internalization of shame in the form of an "affect-shame bind" is ultimately responsible for an individual's inability to consciously access his or her affect-laden inner experience.

The specific mechanism by which shame becomes internalized according to Kaufman is based upon script theory (Tomkins, 1987b). According to script theory, individuals internalize their experience through imagery, and this imagery when combined with affect is stored in memory as a scene. These scenes then become the basis of personality (Kaufman, 1996). When an affect, drive, or interpersonal need is followed by shaming, shame binds are created. The creation of a shame bind involves an internalized connection between shame and a particular affect, drive, or interpersonal need. Once a shame bind has been formed, it is stored in memory in the form of a scene. Later recurrence of the shame-bound affect, drive, or interpersonal need will then reactivate the original scene, thereby spontaneously eliciting shame. Because the affect, drive, or interpersonal need is now always experienced in conjunction with shame, its expression becomes restricted. With regard to creative functioning, Tomkins succinctly argues, a person "who is constantly afraid or ashamed or distressed cannot also be interested in the exploration of novelty" (1963, p.353).

Shame Research

Chang (1988) examined the relationship between shame and self-esteem. Shame was assessed by using the Internalized Shame Scale (Cook, 1984), and self-esteem was assessed by means of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and a six item scale by Cheek and Buss (1981). Chang reported a correlation of $-.90$ between the Internalized Shame Scale and both of the self-esteem scales. In addition, Chang examined the correlation of the shame and self-esteem scales with a large number of external variables including depression, anxiety, and anger. Finding the pattern of correlations to be nearly identical for the shame and self-esteem measures, Chang concluded that shame and self-esteem, as measured in his investigation, are "not only almost perfectly correlated, but also parallel in their correlations with outside variables. They are unidimensional by both the test for internal consistency and the test for external consistency (or parallelism). It is, therefore, proposed that shame and self-esteem are the same dimension. That is, there is only one dimension of shame and self-esteem" (p.87).

Other research has demonstrated the close link between shame and psychopathology. A recent study by Akashi (1994) demonstrates the pervasive role played by shame in the psychopathology of a clinical population. The psychopathology variables were obtained from administering the Brief Symptom Checklist (Derogatis, 1992). Akashi found significant correlations between shame and all categories of psychopathology on the SCL-50. Shame has also been shown to play a central role in the etiology of bulimia nervosa (Frish-McCreery, 1991). In this study, bulimics reported significantly higher levels of shame than non-bulimics. Also, bulimics rated the

interpersonal needs theorized by Kaufman (1996) as significantly more shameful than non-bulimics. Shame has also been significantly correlated with depression. Izard and Schwartz (1986) found that among children, college students, and adults, the common core of emotions in depression included sadness, inner-directed hostility, and shame. Hoblitzelle (1987) found a significant correlation between the Internalized Shame Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory. Additional research has pointed to the role of shame in obsessive-compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, hostility, psychoticism, phobic anxiety, and paranoid ideation.

Research Objectives and Overview of Design

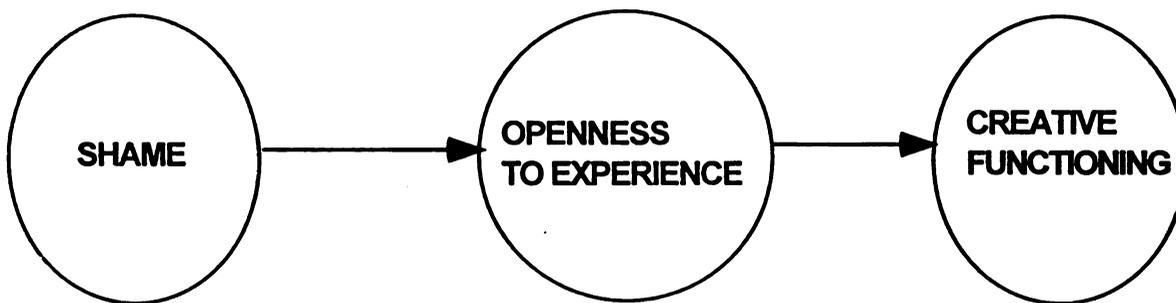
From the theoretical perspective of affect theory, it can be hypothesized that a high level of internalized shame will negatively impact an individual's ability to remain open to affect-laden experience, and therefore will inhibit his or her creative ability. Research within the psychometric tradition has demonstrated a relationship between creativity and openness to experience (McCrae, 1987). The present study will contribute to this understanding by measuring creativity using the Creative Functioning Test, which is a method more suited to psychoanalytic and humanistic understandings of creative functioning (Smith & Carlsson, 1990). The present study aims to show that shame limits an individual's ability to function creatively by disrupting his or her ability to consciously experience affect. Thus, openness to experience is hypothesized to be an intervening variable linking shame and creativity.

Hypotheses

- 1. It is predicted that creative functioning as measured by the CFT will be positively correlated with openness to experience as measured by the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI.**
- 2. It is predicted that openness to experience as measured by the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI will be negatively correlated with the level of internalized shame as measured by the ISS.**
- 3. It is predicted that the level of internalized shame as measured by the ISS, and creative functioning as measured by the CFT will be related by way of the intervening variable of openness to experience as measured by the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI. This relationship is demonstrated in Figure 1.**

Figure 1

Hypothesized Path Model



CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were 102 undergraduate students recruited from the undergraduate psychology subject pool at Michigan State University, a large midwestern university. The subjects in the undergraduate subject pool each received one-half hour credit toward extra credit points in their psychology class in return for participating in this study.

Questionnaires and Measurement Techniques

The Creative Functioning Test (CFT)

In contrast to the traditional measures of creativity based upon divergent thinking ability, the CFT views creativity as a "generative or productive way of experiencing reality, including the perceiver's own self" (Smith and Carlsson, 1990, p.5). This model of creativity assumes that the generative quality of the creative individual's perception of reality is facilitated by open communication between different levels of inner experience. "Primitive or unadapted types of experience and mental functioning should be accessible to reconstruction and re-use, and in this lies the chance to start anew and break away from ingrained patterns of experience," according to Smith and Carlsson, (1990, p.6). This model assumes that creative functioning is fundamentally a process of perception during which the creative individual pays attention not only to the objective (intersubjective) reality, but can also make conscious subjective ideas and alternative notions of reality based on their own subjective experiences and interpretations (Smith, 1981). As a result of this emphasis on the relationship between the self and reality, the CFT is well suited to

psychodynamic and humanistic formulations of creativity. "The psychometric tradition has focused on problem solving and other cognitive activities, viewed in the light of trait psychology, while our studies have emphasized relations between the experienced self and the experienced outside reality in a process perspective" (Smith and Carlsson, 1990, p.216).

Early research using the CFT clearly demonstrates the sensitivity of this instrument to the dimension of subjective inner awareness. In the investigation by Smith and Carlsson, (1990), subjects were induced to focus either on external stimuli or their own internal mental processes. One group was given placebo pills and informed that the pills would induce relaxation and increase sensitivity to one's inner mental life. The other group was given placebo pills and informed that the pills would increase concentration and alertness to outside stimulation. Results showed that subjects in the relaxation group generated significantly more alternative interpretations of the presented stimulus on the CFT than the concentration group, thus indicating the sensitivity of the CFT to level of inner awareness.

The CFT is carried out by presenting the subject with a gradually prolonged stimulus using a tachistoscope. A thematic picture is first presented in an ascending series of exposure times beginning with subthreshold values. At a given exposure time that is long enough for the subject to successfully identify the picture, the series is presented with descending exposure times. By subsequently diminishing the exposure time, the experimenter eventually erodes the basis for a correct perception. During this stage of the test, some subjects cling tightly to the conventional meaning of the picture, while others

return to idiosyncratic interpretations. To remain encapsulated in the established meaning of the picture, that is, to be unable or unwilling to choose alternative interpretations, is seen to characterize the individual lacking in creativity. In contrast, the creative individual is seen to be more likely to abandon his or her correct stimulus interpretation and instead accept more unfinished and subjective ones. The developers of the test state that the “methodology allows us systematically to observe processes ‘behind’ everyday perception, optimally the entire process from its roots in the individual’s early, primitive experience to its culmination in an objective reflection of reality” (Smith and Carlsson, 1990).

Because the correct interpretation acquires a strongly authoritative stamp, once the perceiver has learned the correct meaning, he or she is greatly tempted to retain it, not indulging in subjective or deviant interpretations. According to Smith & Van Der Meer (1994), the creative individual goes beyond the established version of the stimulus meaning and demonstrates the courage to break convention and challenge his or her own anxiety.

The CFT protocols can be scored in both the ascending and descending directions. However, results of the descending series correlate with the most clearly creative features of personality (Smith & Danielsson, 1982). In the present study, only the descending series was scored. The degree to which the correct stimulus meaning is abandoned provides the criterion of scoring, and this yields three scoring levels: *High*, *Medium*, and *Low* creativity (Carlsson, 1990). Test-retest reliability is reported to be .80, and interrater correspondence has been reported to be .92 (Smith and Carlsson, 1990).

High creativity: the subject interprets the whole picture in a completely different

way during one or several exposures.

Medium creativity: only part of the picture is interpreted differently, or the interpretation is rather vague, or only implies plastic changes in the contents of the picture.

Low creativity: at the most the subject reports that the picture gets dimmer, darker, or disappears piece by piece.

The Openness to Experience Domain of the NEO-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI)

The NEO-PI is a 181-item questionnaire developed through factor analysis to fit a five-dimensional model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1985b). An earlier version of the test, the NEO Inventory (McCrae & Costa, 1983a), measured traits in the three domains of neuroticism, extroversion, and openness to experience. Recent modifications (McCrae & Costa, 1987) have added two new scales to measure agreeableness and conscientiousness. Internal consistency and 6-month test-retest reliability for the Neuroticism, Extroversion, and Openness scales range from .85 to .93 (McCrae & Costa, 1983a). The Openness to Experience domain assesses proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake as well as toleration for and exploration of the unfamiliar. In this way it closely approximates the dimension of novelty-seeking derived from Tomkins's formulation of excitement as the primary affect underlying creativity. High scorers on this domain tend to be curious, have broad interests, are creative, original, imaginative, intellectually curious, emotionally responsive, sensitive, empathic, and value their own feelings. These characteristics also correspond to Rogers's theoretical construct of openness to experience. Low scorers tend to have a narrow range of emotions, are less sensitive to beauty, prefer the familiar, follow strict routines, are narrow minded, and do

not enjoy intellectual challenges.

Research relating the NEO-PI to divergent thinking (McCrae, 1987) demonstrated that the Openness to Experience domain was positively related to five out of the six measures of divergent thinking used in the investigation. The only divergent thinking test which did not correlate significantly to Openness to Experience was the Obvious Consequences test. McCrae believes that this finding is the exception that proves the rule. The Obvious Consequences test calls for common and unoriginal responses which require certain cognitive skills such as general fluency, but are not reflective of creative or imaginative thinking. Therefore it is not surprising that they are unrelated to openness. By contrast, the Remote Consequences test, which requires novel responses and imaginative thinking, is significantly correlated with the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI. No research has been conducted to date examining the relationship between creative functioning and the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI using a creativity test suited to the psychoanalytic and humanistic theories of creativity.

The Internalized Shame Scale

The Internalized Shame Scale (ISS) was developed to measure enduring, chronic shame that has become an internalized part of one's identity (Cook, 1989). The ISS consists of 30 Likert-scaled items that yield two basic scale scores. The two scales include a 24-item shame scale and a 6-item self-esteem scale. The scale was initially developed in 1984 and since that time has been administered to over 3,000 subjects in both clinical and non-clinical settings (Cook, 1990). Extensive reliability and validity studies have resulted in four revisions of the scale. Alpha reliability coefficients for the most recent version

range from .94 for the shame scale and .88 for the self-esteem scale. Test-retest reliability coefficients range from .71 to .84. A series of studies comparing the ISS with three other self-concept/self-esteem measures led to the conclusion that the ISS was measuring "a trait that contributed more to the development of emotional problems than did low self-esteem alone" (Cook, 1988). Research using the ISS has repeatedly demonstrated a strong positive relationship between the level of internalized shame and psychopathology (Rybeck, 1991; Allen et al., 1993; Druschel, 1993; Firestone, 1991; Tangney, 1992).

Procedure

All subjects completed the Creative Functioning Test, the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI, and the Internalized Shame Scale. After signing a consent form, each subject was first administered the Creative Functioning Test. The stimulus for the test was a still life picture of a vase of flowers sitting on a table, and was presented using a tachistoscope. Five exposures of the stimulus were presented on the ascending series, and five exposures were presented on the descending series. Subjects were asked to report what they saw after each exposure. Following the Creative Functioning Test, subjects were asked to complete the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI and the Internalized Shame Scale. Administration of these two questionnaires was randomized to control for any effects of order. Following the administration of these questionnaires, the subjects were given a sheet outlining the theory of the study and a description of the variables. All subjects were then given an opportunity to ask further questions.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Demographics

The total number of subjects recruited for this study was 102. Three subjects did not complete all of the items contained in the questionnaires and were eliminated from the subsequent analyses. Of the remaining sample, 28 were men and 71 were women. They ranged in age from 17-22 years (mean=19.20 years).

Hypotheses

The relationships between creative functioning (CFT), openness to experience (NEO), and internalized shame (ISS) were analyzed using correlational analysis. The means and standard deviations for the CFT, the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI, and the ISS are reported in Table 1. The mean score on the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI was 53 and the standard deviation was 6. The mean score on the Internalized Shame Scale was 28 and the standard deviation was 17.

Hypothesis 1

The correlations between scores on the CFT and the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI are reported in Table 2. Consistent with the first hypothesis, the results indicated a strong positive correlation ($r=.59, p<.01$) between creative functioning

Table 1

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CFT	99	1.00	3.00	2.141	.869
OPENNESS	99	23.00	80.00	61.778	11.056
ISS	99	1.00	88.00	28.232	16.968

as measured by the CFT and openness to experience as measured by the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI.

Hypothesis II

The correlations between scores on the ISS and the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI are reported in Table 2. Consistent with the second hypothesis, results indicated a small relationship between the Openness to Experience domain of the NEO-PI and level of internalized shame as measured by the ISS. Although this relationship did not reach statistical significance at the $p > .05$ level ($r = -.06$), the inference probability for this relationship was calculated to be .72, indicating a likely relationship between these variables as hypothesized.

Hypothesis III

Contrary to the hypothesized model, creative functioning as measured by the CFT and the level of internalized shame as measured by the ISS were significantly positively correlated ($r = .22$, $p < .05$).

Table 2

Summary of Correlations, Reliabilities, and Confidence Intervals

	CFT	OPENNESS	ISS
CFT	1.000	.70 .70** .48	.38 .26* .07
OPENNESS	.591**	1.000	.11 -.060 .22
ISS	.224*	-.059	1.000

** = $p < .01$

* = $p < .05$

Note: Correlations above the diagonal are corrected for attenuation

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This investigation attempted to lend support to a humanistic formulation of creativity as a healthy human ability, while refuting a psychoanalytic conception of creativity as a pathological regressive process. Paradoxically, the results of this study support both the humanistic and psychoanalytic understandings of creativity. Creativity was found to be positively correlated with both openness to experience and the level of internalized shame. Therefore, the question of whether creativity is indicative of healthy functioning or psychopathology remains obscure. Nevertheless, the findings of this investigation have important implications for creativity theory, shame theory, and the openness to experience dimension of personality.

Beginning with Freud, who first formulated the creative process in terms of a pathological flight from reality, psychoanalytic theorists have generally viewed the work of the artist as an expression of unconscious wishes and regressive thinking, and therefore as appropriate material for interpretation within a psychoanalytic context. Contrary to the hypothesis of this investigation, the results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between shame and creativity. This finding can be seen as supporting a psychoanalytic understanding of creativity by demonstrating a positive relationship between creative functioning and the level of psychological pathology.

In contrast to such a view, other theories have instead suggested that creativity is an adaptive process, one which results directly from psychological health. Many of these theories have hypothesized that creativity requires a certain openness or sensitivity to

one's self and the world. Rogers (1961) theorized that the first inner condition of creativity is openness to experience. For Rogers, openness to experience is characterized by "being openly aware of one's feelings and attitudes as they exist at an organic level." This results in greater awareness of what exists at this moment in oneself and in the situation, rather than the distortion of reality to fit a pattern which the individual already holds (Rogers, 1961). As formulated by Rogers, a primary characteristic of individuals who are open to their experience is their lack of psychological defensiveness. Thus, openness to experience allows the creative individual to be free from the psychological defensiveness that may otherwise reinforce old patterns, thereby restricting the individual's ability to view inner and outer reality from a fresh perspective. Unlike Freud (1916) who believed that creativity involved a flight *from* reality due to the pathological needs of the artist, Rogers believed that creativity is a movement *toward* reality made possible by the artist's exceptional degree of openness to inner as well as outer experience. The results of this study indicate a strong positive relationship between creative functioning and openness to experience. This finding lends direct support to Roger's humanistic theory of creativity and to one of the main hypotheses of this investigation.

The results of this study thus paradoxically appear to support both the humanistic and psychoanalytic theories of creativity. Creativity was found to be positively correlated with internalized shame, a variable associated with psychopathology, and also with openness to experience, a variable associated with psychological health. However, other research involving the instrument used to measure the level of internalized shame in this study may provide an explanation for this apparent paradox. Utilizing a pre-post

experimental design, Meola (1988) found that scores on the Internalized Shame Scale actually increased significantly as predicted, in comparison to the control group, after subjects attended a course designed to facilitate shame awareness while also increasing self-esteem. This finding was interpreted to mean that scores increased on the Internalized Shame Scale as a direct result of the subject's ability "to identify shame and consciously differentiate internal patterns of experience which are shame producing" (Meola, 1988, p.45).

Therefore, it could be argued that people vary in their ability to assess their level of unconscious shame. As a result, some of the subjects in the present investigation who evidenced a high score on the Internalized Shame Scale may have done so as a result of an increased *awareness* of shame rather than because of an actual high level of internalized shame. This idea is congruent with Roger's theory of creativity in which the level of awareness is associated with creative functioning, and it may further explain the positive relationship between shame and creativity found in this study.

In addition to explaining the apparent paradox observed in this investigation, the distinction between the level of awareness of shame and the actual level of internalized shame itself suggests the need to expand shame research in order to more explicitly include this distinction. One of the cornerstones of shame theory is the commitment to the central importance of making conscious all aspects of inner and outer experience. Kaufman (1991) states that a "conscious self is able to experience in full awareness all of the distinctly different components of the self, including affects, needs, drives, and purposes" (p.11). In later referring specifically to shame and other negative affects,

Kaufman argues that, “conscious access to the entire range of affects is essential” (p.56). Although shame theory already includes the distinction between conscious and unconscious shame, there have as yet been no attempts to formulate an empirical measure of this dimension. Therefore, any measure of shame that does not take this distinction into consideration is vulnerable to contamination between the level of awareness of shame and the actual level of internalized shame. Future research using projective tests that assess an individual’s level of shame independent of the individual’s level of conscious awareness of shame may provide further insight into this distinction.

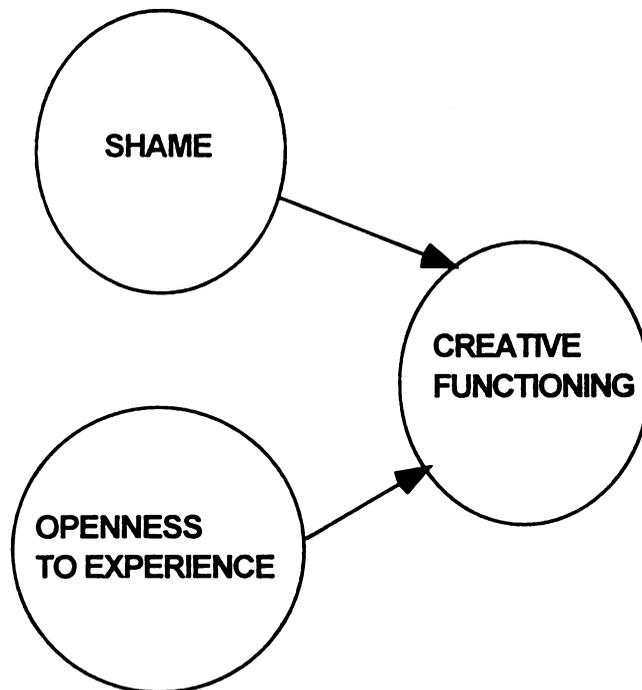
A second possible interpretation of the data suggests that a different path model may be more accurate than the one hypothesized in this investigation. This model is illustrated in Figure 2. This model suggests that both shame and openness to experience contribute independently to creative genesis.

The results of this investigation also contribute to the dialogue concerning the nature of creativity research itself. Most traditional psychometric researchers of creativity employ creativity tests that primarily focus on cognitive activities such as problem solving. For example, the most famous and widely used creativity test within this tradition is Guilford’s (1967) test of divergent thinking. Like other psychometric tests of creativity, this test measures the level of achievement and therefore cannot explain how an individual achieved a given level, nor the strategies used during the actual creative process. However, the creative functioning test used in the present investigation is based on a psychodynamic understanding of the creative process:

We depart from the cognitive test tradition within which creativity usually

Figure 2.

Reformulated Path Model



has been defined, and place the term, at least partly, in the context of a psychology of perception. We thus speak of creativity as a generative or productive way of experiencing reality including the perceiver's own self. In accordance with other researchers in the field with an orientation toward psychodynamics, we assume that the generative quality of the reality contact is favored by open communication between different levels of experience. (Smith and Carlsson, p.5, 1990)

The results of the present study support this dynamic view of creativity by demonstrating a strong correlation between creative functioning and openness to experience. By highlighting this important relationship, this study further points to the limitations of traditional psychometric approaches to creativity that do not take into account the role of openness to inner experience in creative genesis.

Furthermore, this study also adds weight to the general recognition of openness to experience as a central domain of personality. Previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between openness to experience and divergent thinking ability (McCrae, 1987). However, no research has been conducted to examine the relationship between openness to experience and creativity using a creativity test that is suited to a psychodynamic or humanistic formulation of creative functioning. The results of this investigation clearly demonstrate a relationship between openness to experience and creative genesis, and also point to several promising directions for future research. At this point, research on the domain of openness to experience has focussed on describing such characteristics of this dimension as curiosity, emotional responsiveness, the tendency to value feelings, and the level of empathy. The underlying cause for why these characteristics tend to group together and correlate with openness to experience remains an important theoretical as well as empirical question. In addition, there has been little

empirical investigation into what conditions might cause or facilitate the development of openness to experience within an individual. Clearly, this construct of personality promises to be a fruitful domain for future psychological research.

Conclusion

The present study sought to examine the relationship between creative functioning, openness to experience, and shame. The aim of the study was to provide support for a humanistic formulation of creativity while providing evidence against a psychoanalytic conceptualization of creativity. The results of this study demonstrate a significant link between creativity and openness to experience as hypothesized by humanistic theories of creativity. The results also indicate a significant relationship between creativity and the level of internalized shame, thereby lending support to psychoanalytic theories of creativity which associate creative functioning with psychopathology. The results of this study suggest the need to revise creativity theory to include both the positive and negative aspects of psychological functioning. Creative functioning may rest on the ability to consciously tolerate the entire range of both positive and negative affects.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A

NEO-Personality Inventory

Instructions:

Please make all your answers on the answer sheet. Do not write in this test booklet. This questionnaire contains 48 questions. Read each carefully. For each statement, mark the one response which best represents your opinion. Please make sure your answer is in the correctly numbered space. You will answer using the following categories.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

Mark “**SD**” if the statement is definitely false or you strongly disagree.

Mark “**D**” if the statement is mostly false or you disagree.

Mark “**N**” if the statement is about equally true or false, or if you cannot decide, or if you are neutral on the statement.

Mark “**A**” if the statement is mostly true or you agree.

Mark “**SA**” if the statement is definitely true or you strongly agree.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and you need not be an “expert” to complete this questionnaire. The purpose of this experiment will be best served if you describe yourself and state your opinions as accurately as possible.

Please read each item carefully and mark the one answer that best corresponds to your agreement or disagreement. Answer every item. Note that the answers are numbered down the columns on the answer sheet, and make sure your answer is marked in the correctly numbered space.

1. I have a very active imagination.
2. Aesthetic and artistic concerns aren't very important to me.
3. Without strong emotions, life would be uninteresting to me.
4. I'm pretty set in my ways.
5. I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas.
6. I believe letting students hear controversial speakers can only confuse and mislead them.
7. I try to keep all my thoughts directed along realistic lines and avoid flights of fancy.
8. I am sometimes completely absorbed in music I am listening to.

Appendix A (cont.)

9. I rarely experience strong emotions.
10. I think it's interesting to learn and develop new hobbies.
11. I find philosophical arguments boring.
12. I believe that laws and social policies should change to reflect the needs of a changing world.
13. I have an active fantasy life.
14. Watching ballet or modern dance bores me.
15. How I feel about things is important to me.
16. Once I find the right way to do something I stick to it.
17. I enjoy solving problems or puzzles.
18. I believe we should look to our religious authorities for decisions on moral issues.
19. I don't like to waste my time day dreaming.
20. I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature.
21. I seldom pay much attention to my feelings of the moment.
22. I often try new and foreign foods.
23. I sometimes lose interest when people talk about very abstract, theoretical matters.
24. I believe that the different ideas of right and wrong that people in other societies have may be valid for them.
25. I enjoy concentrating on a fantasy or daydream and exploring all its possibilities, letting
it grow and develop.
26. Poetry has little or no effect on me.
27. I experience a wide range of emotions or feelings.
28. I prefer to spend my time in familiar surroundings.
29. I enjoy working on "mind-twister" type puzzles.
30. I believe that loyalty to one's ideals and principles is more important than "open-mindedness"
31. If I feel my mind starting to drift off into daydreams, I usually get busy and start concentrating on some work or activity instead.
32. I seldom notice the moods or feelings that different environments produce.
33. Sometimes I make changes around the house just to try something different.
34. I have little interest in speculating on the nature of the universe or the human condition.
35. I consider myself broad-minded and tolerant of other people's life styles.

Appendix A (cont.)

36. As a child I rarely enjoyed games of make believe.
37. I find it easy to empathize -- to feel myself what others are feeling.
38. On a vacation, I prefer going back to a tried and true spot.
39. I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.
40. I think that if people don't know what they believe in by the time they are 25, there is something wrong with them.
41. I would have difficulty just letting my mind wander without control or guidance.
42. Certain kinds of music have an endless fascination for me.
43. Odd things -- like certain scents or the names distinct places -- can evoke strong moods
in me.
44. I follow the same route when I go someplace.
45. I have a wide range of intellectual interests.
46. Sometimes when I am reading poetry or looking at a work of art, I feel a chill or wave of excitement.
47. I believe that the "new morality" of permissiveness is no morality at all.
48. I enjoy reading poetry that emphasizes feelings and images more than story lines.

Appendix B

Internalized Shame Scale

DIRECTIONS: Below is a list of statements describing feelings or experiences that you may have from time to time or that are familiar to you because you have had these feelings and experiences for a long time. Most of these statements describe feelings and experiences that are generally painful or negative in some way. Some people will seldom or never have had many of these feelings. Everyone has had some of these feelings at some time, but if you find that these statements describe the way you feel a good deal of the time, it can be painful just reading them. Try to be as honest as you can in responding.

Read each statement carefully and circle the number to the left of the item that indicates the frequency with which you find yourself feeling or experiencing what is described in the statement. Use the scale below.

Scale

0	1	2	3	4
NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALMOST ALWAYS

- 0 1 2 3 4 1. I feel like I am never quite good enough.
- 0 1 2 3 4 2. I feel somehow left out.
- 0 1 2 3 4 3. I think that people look down on me.
- 0 1 2 3 4 4. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a success.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5. I scold myself and put myself down.
- 0 1 2 3 4 6. I feel insecure about others opinions of me.
- 0 1 2 3 4 7. Compared to other people, I feel that I never measure up.
- 0 1 2 3 4 8. I see myself as being very small and insignificant.
- 0 1 2 3 4 9. I feel I have much to be proud of.
- 0 1 2 3 4 10. I feel intensely inadequate and full of self doubt.
- 0 1 2 3 4 11. I feel as if I am somehow defective as a person, like there is something basically wrong with me.

Appendix B (cont.)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 12. When I compare myself to others I am just not as important. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 13. I have an overpowering dread that my faults will be revealed. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 14. I feel I have a number of good qualities. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 15. I see myself striving for perfection, only to fall short. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 16. I think that others are able to see my defects. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 17. I could beat myself with a club when I make a mistake. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 18. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 19. I would like to shrink away when I make a mistake. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 20. I replay painful events over and over in my mind. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 21. I feel I am a person on an equal plane with others. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 22. At times I feel like I will break into a thousand pieces. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 23. I feel as if I have lost control over my body and my feelings. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 24. Sometimes I feel no bigger than a pea. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 25. At times I wish the earth would open up and swallow me. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 26. I have this painful gap in me that I haven't been able to fill. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 27. I feel empty and unfulfilled. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 28. I take a positive attitude toward myself. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 29. My loneliness is more like emptiness. |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 30. I feel like there is something missing. |

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